

CLAIMS

1. A plate attachable to two adjacent spinal vertebrae comprising:

first and second apertures defined by the plate for the passage of screws which attach to the spinal vertebrae; and

a cleat extending from an interior face of said plate.
2. The plate of claim 1 in which one of said first and second apertures is a slot.
3. The plate of claim 1 including a central portion having a reduced width.
4. The plate of claim 1 wherein said cleat is aligned along a common transverse axis with the center of said first aperture.
5. The plate of claim 1 including a second cleat wherein said second cleat is aligned along a common transverse axis with the center of said second aperture.
6. The plate of claim 1 wherein the plate is bowed along its width.
7. A plate system for holding two vertebrae apart comprising:

first and second screws for attaching to said vertebrae;

a plate having interior and exterior faces;

said plate defining at least two apertures;

said interior face being provided with a cleat.
8. The system of claim 7 wherein said screws are of a cancellous type.
9. The system of claim 7 wherein said plate has a length not exceeding 43 millimeters and a width not exceeding 12 millimeters.

10. The system of claim 7 wherein said cleat is in the form of a conical spike.
11. The system of claim 7 wherein said plate further includes a leading edge and a trailing edge and a beam integrally formed within said plate, said beam extending from said leading edge to trailing edge in an unbroken line generally along a centerline of said plate.
12. A plate system for holding two vertebrae apart comprising:
 - a plate attachable to the two vertebrae;
 - first and second apertures defined by said plate for the passage of screws which attach to the vertebrae wherein at least one of said apertures is a slot;
 - a single cleat extending from an interior face of said plate; and
 - a cervical implant to be placed between the spinal vertebrae.
13. The plate system of claim 12 wherein said plate includes a second cleat.
14. The plate system of claim 13 wherein the first cleat is aligned along a common transverse axis with the center of the first aperture and the second cleat is aligned along a common transverse axis with the center of said second aperture.
15. The plate system of claim 12 wherein said plate further includes a leading edge and a trailing edge and a beam integrally formed within said plate, said beam extending from said leading edge to trailing edge in an unbroken line generally along a centerline of said plate and said plate is bowed along its width.
16. The plate system of claim 12 further including first and second screws for attaching to said vertebrae and first and second nuts attachable to said first and second screws respectively, said first and second nuts for maintaining said plate in a position to hold said vertebrae apart.
17. A method of holding two spinal vertebrae apart comprising the steps of:

a. placing a single screw into each of two adjacent vertebrae of a human spine having a central axis,

b. attaching a distraction adapter to each screw,

c. attaching the distraction adapters to a distraction tool,

d. spreading said vertebrae by actuation of said distraction tool,

e. mounting a plate upon the screws, said plate having

first and second apertures defined by the plate for the passage of the screws

wherein at least one of said apertures is a slot; and

f. securing said plate to said screws with two fasteners.

18. The method of claim 16 further including the step of placing an implant between said two adjacent vertebrae.